

TEXT- 1 Peter 2:21 *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

INTRO – Why would we want to follow the steps of Jesus?

Psalms 37:23 *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

Jesus was the greatest man to ever live on this earth. He is the living Word. Jesus is at the heart and life of the Bible. If Jesus was removed from the Bible, it would become lifeless.

The Old Testament looks for a deliverer to come:

- **In Genesis He is the promised seed.**
- **In Exodus He is the Passover lamb.**
- **In Leviticus He is our High priest.**
- **In Numbers He is the star out of Jacob.**
- **In Deuteronomy He is a prophet like Moses.**

The theme continues through the Old Testament that someone is coming.

Matthew 16:16 *And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Every believer is admonished to follow in His steps.

Matthew 16:24 *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

Matthew 10:38 *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

John 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me*

1 John 2:6 *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

Paul followed Him and asked us to follow as he follows Christ.

Corinthians 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

Galatians 5:25 *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

Charles M. Sheldon wrote a book many years ago that has become a classic. The book tells the story of how a pastor and his congregation committed themselves to following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. In every situation of life they would ask, "What would Jesus do?" Then these devoted people would seek to do what they felt Jesus would do. As they followed in the footsteps of Jesus they found themselves becoming more and more like Him. The book was appropriately entitled *In His Steps*.

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Colossians 2:6 *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*

How can we follow in the footsteps of Jesus? Reflect upon some characteristics of our Lord's life and ministry and learn how we can follow His example. What are the ways in which we can follow in His footsteps?

I. We Need to Follow in the Footsteps of His Purpose.

Jesus concerns of serving His Father took priority over everything else. This was evident when, as a twelve-year-old boy, He responded to the reprimanding remarks of His parents by saying, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" **Lu 2:49** "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." **John 4:34** **John 8:29** *And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.*

This was His philosophy of life. He did not seek to please others but rather "to please God."

Mamie Eisenhower revealed some of the reasons why General Dwight D. Eisenhower was such a great leader. He was able to inspire others to serve and sacrifice because of his deep love and loyalty to his country. Mrs. Eisenhower said, "I learned early in our married life about his single-minded devotion to America."

Jesus demands a "God-first loyalty" from His followers and He gave us the example of His own life by which we can pattern our lives **Luke 14:26** *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

We are to give Him the supreme loyalty in our lives.

II. We Need to Follow in the Footsteps of His Prayerfulness.

Prayer was absolutely central in the life and ministry of Jesus.

There are at least fifteen recorded occasions on which Jesus prayed. His example as a person of prayer stands as irrefutable and undeniable proof that prayer is vitally important in the life of a Christian.

Eric Liddell, the hero of the 1924 Olympic games, the athlete who would not run on Sunday. He received a gold medal for winning the 400 and a bronze medal in the 200.

Later he became a missionary in North China. While Eric Liddell was faithfully proclaiming the gospel he was arrested by the Communists and thrown into a prison. There he was placed with other missionaries who also had been apprehended. They watched Eric rise up early in the morning before anyone else and get down on his knees and pray. He organized a prayer service, and Liddell prayed with his fellow prisoners. He was constantly communing with God.

In studying the prayer life of Jesus Christ, Eric Liddell committed his life to following in the footsteps of Jesus' prayerfulness.

We are not prepared to preach, or to teach, or to lead, or even to face the demands of a work schedule until we have followed in the footsteps of His prayerfulness. A person might as well forget about following Christ and turn in his discipleship badge unless he or she is willing to pay the price of a disciplined prayer life.

III. We Need to Follow in the Footsteps of Reaching People.

When William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was well up into his nineties and in failing health, he missed his first Salvation Army convention, which was to be held in London. As the delegates convened William Booth sent a message to be read at the beginning of the convention's proceedings. The message was brief. In fact, it was just one word: "Dear delegates," and then came the one-word message: "Others," Booth characterized his life best when he wrote in the King of England's autograph album: "Some men's ambition is art; some men's ambition is fame; some men's ambition is gold; my ambition is the souls of men."

A. Jesus loved children

If we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, little children will be important to us. **Mark 10:14** *But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*

B. Jesus loved sinful men - Jesus not only loved little children but big sinners, too. **Luke 15:2** *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*

C. Jesus loved outcasts - He loved tax collectors like Matthew and Zacchaeus. He loved broken people like Mary Magdalene and the Woman at the Well.

The most amazing fact about God's love in Christ is that He not only loves the smallest child and the biggest sinner, He also loves His worst enemies. While in Hitler's prison, Martin Niemoller wrote: "It took me a long time to learn that God is not the enemy of my enemies. He is not even the enemy of His enemies." Jesus Christ proved to be the God of love, and that love extends to those who oppose Him and hate Him most.

Are people important to us? Do we care that literally millions of people in our own state, in our own country, in the entire world are lost without Christ? We need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus' people-centeredness.

IV. We Need to Follow in the Footsteps of His Purity.

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

Light, among other things, is a symbol of purity. During His earthly ministry Jesus Christ was pure in mind, pure in speech and pure in action.

1 Peter 1:15-16 *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

We must be people of purity. We cannot afford anything less.

V. We Need to Follow in the Footsteps of His Perseverance.

Hebrews 12:2-3 *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

In Hebrews 12:1-3 the Christian life is portrayed as a race — a race that must be run with endurance. Jesus, our Lord, has pioneered the path before us and is waiting at the finish line. Every Christian must "look to Jesus" at the finish line of the race and run the race with perseverance.

Jesus Christ wants us to go to the finish line. He doesn't want us to be a quitter like Demas but a finisher like the Apostle Paul who declared, "I have finished my course."

VI. We Need to Follow in the Footsteps of His Proclamation.

Luke saw Jesus fulfilling the words of Isaiah 61 when he wrote: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*" **Luke 4:18-19**

First, Jesus came "to heal the brokenhearted." Brokenhearted people are in every city and county of every state. We must do the same.

Second, He came "to preach deliverance to the captives." **John 8:34** *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.* People who live under the bondage of sin need to hear the good news. He came "to give sight to the blind."

Third, Jesus presented the good news of liberation. He came to set at liberty "those who are bruised."

Fourth, Jesus presented the good news of salvation. He came "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

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